

Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 17116

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, NATO, IT

SUBJECT: ITALIAN FORCES FOR NATO

REFS: A) USNATO 6242, DTG 171730Z NOV 75;

B) USNATO 6316, DTG 191841Z NOV 75

SUMMARY. AS REQUESTED IN REF B, THE MISSION HAS FOCUSED ON THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE ITALIAN ARMY -- WHICH SHOULD RESULT IN A MORE EFFECTIVE, ALBEIT SMALLER FORCE THAN NOW EXISTS. THE PROMOTIONAL LAWS -- THE EVENTUAL PASSAGE OF WHICH IS NOT IN DOUBT BUT WHICH MIGHT NOT BE FINALLY ENACTED UNTIL MID-1976; AND THE NEED FOR GREATER CONSULTATIONS WITH NATO ON MATTERS AS IMPORTANT AS THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE FORCES. END SUMMARY.

1. ARMY RESTRUCTURING -- GENERAL COMMENTS:

THE ITALIAN ARMY (IA) RESTRUCTURING PROGRAM IS FAIRLY CLEAR-CUT - THEY INTEND TO REDUCE THEIR SEVEN (TWO ARMORED AND

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FIVE INFANTRY) DIVISIONS, NOW UNDERMANNED AND EQUIPPED WITH

OBSOLETE/OBSCULENT EQUIPMENT (M47 TANKS, ETC.), INTO ONE ARMORED/3 MECHANIZED DIVISIONS THAT WOULD BE MANNED AT 93 PERCENT AND FURNISHED WITH MODERN EQUIPMENT (M60/LEOPARDS). THE NUMBER OF BRIGADES WILL BE REDUCED FROM 36 "SHELL" UNITS TO 24 UNITS AT ALMOST FULL STRENGTH. THE IA FEELS THAT THE REDUCTION IN PERSONNEL AND UNITS WILL BE MORE THAN OFFSET BY GREATER FIREPOWER (ADDITIONAL M109G HOWITZERS, AND FH 70S WHILE ELIMINATING THE 105MM HOWITZER), GREATER MECHANIZATION/MOTORIZATION, AN OVERALL INCREASE IN ANTI-TANK CAPABILITIES (60 LIGHT ATTACK HELICOPTERS EQUIPPED WITH M-65 TOW AND 130 GROUND TOW) THOUGH A REDUCTION OF TANKS IN THAT ROLE. IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS AND TARGET ACQUISITION (REMOTE PILOTED VEHICLES OF 50-60 KMS RANGE). THUS, THE IA'S PLAN FOR RESTRUCTURING SHOULD RESULT IN A SMALLER, MORE COMBAT EFFECTIVE FORCE WITH GREATER MOBILITY. HOWEVER, THERE IS ONE MAJOR CAVEAT - TOO MUCH OF THE RESTRUCTURING PROGRAM IS BASED ON THE UNCERTAIN ASSUMPTION THAT THE 1,100 BILLION LIRE PROCUREMENT BILL WILL BE APPROVED BY THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENT. WITHOUT THE BILL, THE ITALIAN ARMY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO RE-EQUIP ITS SMALLER RESTRUCTURED FORCE. MOREOVER, EVEN ASSUMING THE BILL IS PASSED DURING THE FIRST HALF OF 1976, IT WOULD THEN BE WELL INTO 1977 BEFORE FIRST MAJOR PROCUREMENTS COULD BE EFFECTUATED.

2. FORCE STRUCTURE:

IN GOING FROM 36 BRIGADES TO 24, SIX OF THOSE LOST WOULD COME FROM THE DISSOLUTION OF TWO INFANTRY DIVISIONS - UNITS WHICH HAVE BEEN OUTDATED (EXCEPT FOR USE IN SPECIALIZED TERRAIN AND WARFARE) SINCE WORLD WAR II. THEIR LOSS IS NOT AS GREAT AS IT APPEARS ON PAPER, SINCE THEIR LACK OF MOBILITY SEVERELY RESTRICTED THEIR USE.

TWENTY-FOUR BRIGADES WILL BE AS FOLLOWS:

3 MECHANIZED (SEE NOTE) DIVISIONS - 9

1 ARMORED DIVISION - 3

ALPINE BRIGADES - 5

MOTORIZED BRIGADES - 5

MECHANIZED BRIGADES - 1

AIRBORNE BRIGADE - 1

24 TOTAL

(NOTE: ONE OF THESE IS CENTAURO , PRESENTLY AN ARMORED DIVISION).

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THIS IS BEING DESIGNATED AS A "PROVISIONAL ARMORED BRIGADE", INTERPRETED TO MEAN "WILL BECOME AN ARMORED DIVISION, IF AND WHEN SITUATION DICTATES AND RESOURCES PERMIT".

3. PROJECTED STRENGTH:

ARMY RESTRUCTURED STRENGTH IS LISTED AS 260,000. HOWEVER, THIS FIGURE WILL NOT BE REALIZED FULLY UNTIL JANUARY 1977. IN JANUARY 76, ITALIAN ARMY BEGINS MONTHLY RECRUIT CALL-UP;

THIS CREATES THE PROBLEM OF A CONTINUOUS SHORTAGE BUILD-UP THROUGHOUT 1976, DUE TO THE RELEASE OF THE 1975 INCREMENTS EVERY FOUR MONTHS. IN ESSENCE, THE STRENGTH IS NOW APPROXIMATELY 260,000, BUT WILL DROP TO 200,000 ON 31 DEC., WHEN THE FIRST INCREMENT 75 IS RELEASED. THEN IN 76, ON THE FIRST DAY OF EACH MONTH, 15,00 (APPROX.) WILL BE CALLED UP, BUT ON THE LAST DAYS OF APRIL AND AUGUST, 60,000 EACH WILL BE RELEASED (2ND AND 3RD INCREMENTS OF 75), SO THAT BY 1 DEC. 77, THE ARMY WILL HAVE BUILT UP TO 260,000. APPROXIMATE FORCE STRUCTURE AFTER 1 JAN. 77 SHOULD REFLECT:

- 180,000 RECRUITS
- 35,000 RESERVE OFFICERS, NCOS AND VOLUNTEERS
- 15,000 REGULAR OFFICERS
- 30,000 REGULAR NCOS
- 260,000 TOTAL

THE FOLLOWING IS THE "RESTRUCTURED" FORCE STRUCTURE BY CORPS:

- V CORPS
 - TWO MECHANIZED DIVISIONS: FOLGORE AND MONTOVA
 - TWO INDEPENDENT COMBAT TEAMS (ONE MOTORIZED)
 - ONE ALPINE BRIGADE (PROBABLY JULIA)
 - ONE ARMORED DIVISION: ARIETE
- IV CORPS
 - FOUR ALPINE BRIGADES: OROBICA, TRIDENTINA, CADORE, TAURINENSE;
 - ONE CAVALRY BATTALION.
- III CORPS
 - ONE MECHANIZED INFANTRY BRIGADE: GRANATIERI DI SARDEGNA

4. EQUIPMENT AND LOGISTICS - LEOPARD AND LANCE:
THE REDUCTION IN PROCUREMENT OF THE LEOPARD (FROM 207 TO 180) IS PROBABLY DUE TO DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN ITS CO-PRODUCTION AT OTO-MELARA. (THE IA IS NOT RPT NOT PLEASED WITH THE DESIGN NOR WITH GERMAN COPRODUCTION TECHNIQUES).

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THE REASON FOR THE SLIPPAGE IN PROCUREMENT OF ".....LANCE MISSILES FROM 113 TO 53...." IS THE SIMPLE FACT THAT THE US HAS NOT DELIVERED ON THE LANCE NON-NUCLEAR WARHEAD, AND THE IA HAS ASKED THAT THESE 60 MISSILES BE DELIVERED SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE>NNL.

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S E C R E T FINAL SECTION OF 2 ROME 17116

E.O. 11652: GDS

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5. ARMOR/ANTI-ARMOR:

LEOPARD SLIPPAGES ASIDE, THE POSSIBLE ADDITION OF 120
LEOPARDS (WHICH WOULD MEAN NEW TOTAL OF 920) IS SIGNIFICANT.
THESE, PLUS THE M60S, WILL GIVE THE IA OVER 1200 FIRST-LINE,
MODERN FIGHTING VEHICLES TO REPLACE 2112 M47S CURRENTLY IN
INVENTORY (1908 ASSIGNED TO NATO). THE FOLGORE
RECOILLESS GUN SYSTEM IS TO BE READY FOR PRODUCTION ON 1 MARCH
1976. FOLGORE IS A 76 MM ANTI-TANK ROCKET SYSTEM WITH DESIGNED
GOALS FOR 70 PERCENT KILL AT 500 METERS, AND PLUS 35 PERCENT
KILL AT 1,000 METERS. ITALY ALSO PLANS TO PRODUCE A NEW
VERSATILE ANTI-TANK HELICOPTER (LAH) IN 1980 (SIXTY IN NUMBER).

6. AIR DEFENSE:

THE IA IS DEFINITELY INTERESTED IN THE STINGER, AND HAS ASKED
INFORMALLY OF THE POSSIBILITY OF ACQUIRING 20 OF THESE FOR
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TEST AND EVALUATION AS SOON AS THEY ARE AVAILABLE. ALSO,
THEY ARE STUDYING ANTI-AIR FIRE CONTROL SYSTEMS (E.G., HACs
ADAPTED SMALL CRAFT FIRE CONTROL SYSTEM) TO LINK TOGETHER
THEIR ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY (AAA) - THE IA DOES NOT APPEAR

TO BE INTERESTED IN SUPER-SOPHISTICATED ADA SYSTEMS, BUT
WILL CONCENTRATE ON CLOSE-IN DEFENSE OF POSITIONS.

7. OTHER IMPROVEMENTS.

THE PHASE-OUT OF MOST OF THE IA'S 105MM HOWITZERS AND THEIR
REPLACEMENT BY THE M109G 155MM SELF-PROPELLED HOWITZER AND
164 FH 70 155 MM HOWITZER CONSTITUTES A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE
IN FIREPOWER, RANGE AND QUALITY OF MATERIEL. THE IA USES
THE USA M-109 HULL AND MOUNTS A HIGHER PERFORMANCE GERMAN
WEAPON WITH A LONGER BARREL AND GREATLY INCREASED RANGE.
THE FH 70 IS AN EXTREMELY VERSATILE WEAPON DESIGNED TO FIRE
ALL NATO STANDARD 155MM MUNITIONS, ITS STANDARD RANGE WILL
BE 24 KMS (VS 14.5 FOR THE US M-109) AND IT WILL HAVE A SPECIAL
SHELL WITH A RANGE IN EXCESS OF 30 KMS.

8. WAR RESERVE STOCKS:

PRESENT WAR RESERVE STOCKS DO NOT EXCEED AVERAGE TO TEN DAYS
IN ALL CLASSES (SOME LESS, SOME MORE, BUT NOT BY MUCH).

9. CONSULTATIONS WITH NATO:

MISSION AGREES WITH USNATO DESIRE TO REMIND GOI OF THEIR
COMMITMENT TO CONSULT ADEQUATELY WITH NATO ON THESE SIGNIFICANT
RESTRUCTURING PLANS. IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE
ITALIAN ARMY TASK GROUP ON RESTRUCTURING MET IN JANUARY 1974
AND THAT A 60,000 MAN CUT IN STRENGTH TOOK PLACE THAT SAME
YEAR. WE AND, WE PRESUME, NATO WERE BRIEFED ON THIS AFTER
THE FACT RATHER THAN CONSULTED IN A MANNER THAT MIGHT HAVE
LEFT OPEN THE POSSIBILITY FOR EFFECTIVE NATO INPUTS. WE,
HOWEVER, HAVE LITTLE GROUNDS TO QUARREL WITH THE CONSTRAINTS
WHICH ARE FORCING THE RESTRUCTURING. THE EMBASSY DOES UNDER-
STAND THAT CHIEF OF STAFF VIGLIONE HAS RECENTLY GIVEN A RATHER
FULL BRIEFING ON THE CHANGES TO THE CINCSOUTH ON IN EFFECT A
FAIT ACCOMPLI HARDLY CLASSIFIABLE AS "CONSULTATIONS".

10. ITALIAN AIR FORCE RESTRUCTURING:

THE IAF IS EMBARKED ON A TWO-PHASE RESTRUCTURING PROGRAM
OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS. IT IS THE IAF'S HOPE TO REDUCE
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THE SIZE OF THE FORCE BY 1/3 WITHOUT AFFECTING ITS COMBAT
EFFECTIVENESS. IN ESSENCE, THE RESTRUCTURED FORCE WOULD
HAVE:

- 40 TACTICAL SQUADRONS
- 20 OPERATIONAL BASES
- 8 SAM SQUADRONS
- 20 WINGS
- 2 AIR BRIGADES
- 2 AIR REGIONS
- 16 RADAR CENTERS

FURTHER DETAILS CAN OBTAINED FROM USDAO ROME IR 6 850

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11. PROMOTIONAL LAWS:

THE NAVY'S SPECIAL PROMOTIONAL LAW WAS PASSED IN THE SPRING OF 1975. AT PRESENT THERE ARE NO LEGAL ROADBLOCKS TO THE ITN'S EMBARKING ON THE SHIP CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM ACCURATELY OUTLINED IN THE DPQ NARRATIVE. NONETHELESS, THE ITALIAN NAVY GENERAL STAFF HAS FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO ACTUALLY SPEND THE MONEY. THEY ARE NOT GEARED FOR, NOR DO THEY YET APPRCIATE THE THEORETICAL NEED FOR, A MECHANISM ANALAGOUS TO THE "PROJECT MANAGE" WHICH WOULD BETTER ENABLE THEM TO RATIONALLY UTILIZE THE FUNDS NOW AT THEIR DISPOSAL. THEY DO, HOWEVER, APPRCIATE THAT THEY ARE ENGAGED IN AN ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATION OF AN UNEXPERIENCED MAGNITUDE. THEIR EXPERIENCE INDICATES THAT EVEN SHOULD THE ARMY AND AIRFORCE BILLS BE PASSED, A LENGTHY PERIOD WILL SLIP BY BEFORE ANY NEW EQUIPMENT REACHES THE FIELD.

THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE AIR FORCE HOPES HIS BILL IS PASSED IN DECEMBER AND FEELS IT WILL BE PASSED BY THE END OF JANUARY, AS THEQRE IS NO ORGANIZED POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO IT AND SINCE A NUMBER OF MAJOR AEROSPACE INTERESTS WOULD BE SEVERELY HURT IF IT IS NOT. EMBASSY FEELS IT MUST ADD A CAUTIONARY NOTE AS THE CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR HOLIDAY PERIOD AND THE UNPREDICTABLE PACE OF ITALIAN LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY COULD CAUSE UNINTENDED SLIPPAGE. WE WOULD THERE FORE ASSUME THAT THE CHIEF OF STAFF IS IN A GOOD POSITION TO KNOW WHEN THE BILL WILL PASS, BUT CAUTION THAT HE MIGHT BE DIONG A LITTLE BIT OF WISHFUL THINKING. THERE IS AN EQUAL CHANCE THAT THE BILL WILL BE FINALLY ACTED ON BETWEEN FEBRUARY AND 15 AUGUST 1976. WITHOUT THE LAW, THE IAF WILL CEASE TO BE AN EFFECTIVE

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ORGANIZATION. THE AMOUNT REQUESTED IN THE BILL IS THE MINIMUM AMOUNT CALCULATED BY THE IAF TO MODERNIZE THE FORCE AND MAINTAINE OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS. AN AMOUNT TWICE AS LARGE AS THAT IN THE PRESENT BILL WOULD BE REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN THE FORCE AT 1960 TYPE LEVELS.

THE SAME COMMENTS COULD BE MADE CONCERNING THE ARMY BILL THOUGH IN ITS CASE, WE WOULD EXPECT TO SEE IT PASSED LATER, E.G. JUNE 76 RATHER THAN SOONER. THEY ARE BEING CONSIDERED SEPARATELY AND THE AIR FORCE BILL WAS INTRODUCED FIRST.

IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THESE LAWS ARE IN FACT "AUTHORIZATION BILLS" RATHER THAN "APPROPRIATIONS." THEY ARE A LONG TERM COMMITMENT, BUT THE SERVICES WILL STILL NEED ANNUAL APPROPRIATIONS TO MEET IT. MUCH WILL DEPEND THEREFORE UPON THE WILLINGNESS OF THE PARLIAMENT-THE MAKE UP OF WHICH WILL NATURALLY REFLECT WHAT POLITICAL CHANGES OCCUR IN ITALY OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS- TO MEE THAT COMMITMENT IN THE FACE OF COMPETING BUDGETARY DEMANDS AND POSSIBLE CHANGES IN PRIORITIES. CLEARLY ONE OF THE MOST PRESSING REQUIREMENTS IN THE NEAR TERM IS TO MEET THE GROWING

CLAMOR FOR BETTER CONDITIONS OF SERVICE AND HIGHER PAY, FOR THE
ENLISTED RANKS IN PARTICULAR. AND THERE ARE THE ADDED UNCERTAINTIES
OF INFLATION AND GENERAL ITALIAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY. THERE IS NOT
LIKELY TO BE SIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION FROM THE BROAD POLITICAL
SPECTRUM TO THE
"PROMOTIONAL" LAWS AS LONG AS THEY ARE SEEN TO BE IMPORTANT
TO THE SUPPORT OF ITALIAN INDUSTRY AND LABOR. BUT THERE ARE
NATURALLY SEVERE PRACTICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONSTRAINTS UPON
THE GROWTH OF THE DEFENSE PORTION OF THE NATIONAL BUDGET.
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